



# ADVENT IN THE VALLEY

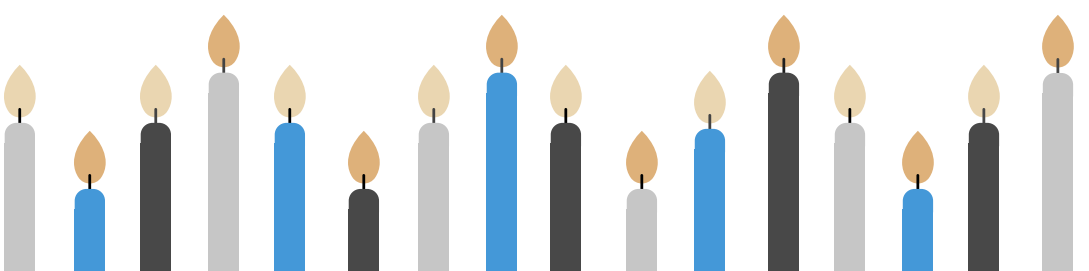
## WEEK 3: JOY

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. We join with the writers of the Bible in shouting for joy that God is always with us. The child of Mary brought a message of compassion and healing, the things that make for real joy. That joy spreads as we follow Jesus' words and actions.

The first Advent candle reminds us to have hope for a better world. The second Advent candle reminds us that God's dreams for peace can become real in our world. Today we light the third Advent candle. It reminds us that God calls us to be part of the healing of the world – to bring real joy.

Let us pray.

Dear God, so many people need your healing and hope. In this season of giving, and on every day of the year, help us to say and do those things that will help bring Christ's compassion and caring to all. Amen.



John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance... Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' 13 He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.' Luke 3:7-18

Week Three Reflections from Rev Canon Susan Clifford

I love the seasons of the Church's year. Each season has its own "flavour". In this season of Advent we wait with a joyful expectation for the birth of the Christ child.

HOWEVER, there is also a somber character to this season. We prepare for Christmas by first entering into this season of penitence and repentance. John the Baptist is the poster boy of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; he speaks God's truth. The people asked him 'what must we do?'

John gives three examples. The man with more than enough was told to share. The tax collectors were told to stop cheating and being greedy. The soldiers were told to stop using their power to threaten others and to stop lying.

These people were just going about their business, doing what everyone does: being selfish, greedy, bullying, lying. This unethical behaviour had become the norm. They all must have thought: "so what? Everyone does it."

Is that the kind of world we want to live in? Let us use this time to reflect on our behaviour. Have we become calloused or cavalier or just plain sloppy in how we do our work or treat others. Have we strayed from Jesus' call to be loving towards all people?

As we prepare for Christmas, let us use this season of penitence to reflect on how we may have strayed from the way of Love.

### Questions for further reflection:

1. There is an ethical requirement to John's message. In this past week, how have I sinned and chosen 'wrong' over 'right'? How could my behaviour have been more loving?
2. True repentance demands that you DO something. What one deliberate loving thing can I do today?
3. Think of an unethical, unjust situation in the world today. What would John the Baptist say about it?